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colloquial, but always flowing and easy and even the passages where distinction has been sought have a captivating simplicity and artlessness. Indeed as the author jogs on with his recollections of pioneer life, his anecdotes of men he has known, and his kindly comments on the changes he has witnessed in American life and ideals, one finds it easiest to surrender all thought of criticism or question as to the authenticity of the statements made. If Mr. Esarey had only had the courage to omit the last ninety pages of the book which contain biographies of the county history order, he would have introduced us to a bit of literature with real unity of purpose. As it is, he has been wise enough to reduce the critical apparatus of footnotes to a minimum and to let Noah Major tell his own story in his own way.

T. C. PEASE

The critical period, 1763-1765. Edited with introduction and notes by Clarence Walworth Alvord, University of Illinois, and Clarence Edwin Carter, Miami university. [Collections of the Illinois state historical library, volume x, British series, volume 1.] (Springfield: Illinois state historical library, 1915. 597 p.)

This work constitutes volume x of the *Collections* of the Illinois state historical library and volume 1 of the British series. Under the title, *The critical period, 1763-65*, there is published a series of manuscripts and reprints on British Illinois. The sources thus collected and edited are of unusual interest to students of western history. These documents enable one to trace the entire process of British occupation in the Illinois country in the period covered by this volume. The materials are arranged conveniently under chapters, each having a short table of contents to facilitate the finding of any particular bit of information sought for. New evidence is given on Pontiac's war, and one chapter is devoted to the expulsion of the Jesuits. Not the least important are the numerous reports of agents, traders, army officers and royal governors. The reprint of a scarce and valuable pamphlet on the proposed colony of Charlottina connects the history of this region with that of Virginia, and other English colonies interested in western lands.

The introductory chapters are excellent summaries of the local history covered by the published documents and the larger significance of these sources is made clear. Mr. Alvord has performed an invaluable service for western historians in thus marking out a new field of research. He has been able to clear away much of the obscurity that has concealed the true significance of the Illinois country in the westward expansion of the English into the Ohio valley. The emergence of this new focus of western history makes it necessary to rearrange and reorganize much that has been looked upon as fixed. Illinois will take its place, hereafter, as the

true center of the old northwest, a place heretofore held by Michigan or Wisconsin. Bearing in mind that this volume is the tenth of the *Collections* and that previous volumes have made available an astonishing mass of new evidence and an unsuspected wealth of documentary sources for the same region, this claim will not seem so unreasonable as it may at first appear. It is certain that the older conventional view of French Illinois is no longer tenable, but what effect this relatively large body of new matter will have upon the form and content of future history writing in the west is of course purely a matter of conjecture. For the first time in the course of American historical research there has been found west of the Alleghanies a real starting point for the reorganization of the western portion of our national history. The Illinois country is, then, the true focus of the colonial west in the eighteenth century. Quebec, New York, Philadelphia, Virginia, and New Orleans are merely so many radial extremes contributing along entirely divergent lines to the common total. Mr. Alvord has revealed to us the nerve center of the trans-Alleghany west and it remains for us to make connection with these results in the outlying regions immediately or remotely beyond the influence of this beginning point of a new civic life in the wilderness.

O. G. LIBBY

County archives of the state of Illinois. By Theodore Calvin Pease, University of Illinois. [Collections of the Illinois state historical library, volume XII, bibliographical series, volume III.] (Springfield: Illinois state historical library, 1915. 730 p.)

This volume is the result of a commendable vision on the part of the trustees of the Illinois state historical library, who deemed it their opportunity to provide a detailed account of the records in the various courthouses of the counties of Illinois and to ascertain, at the same time, if the physical conditions surrounding the county records were such as favored their preservation.

The survey was begun in the autumn of 1911 by Clarence D. Johns, who listed the records of sixty-seven counties in the course of a year. The work was continued in the summer of 1912 by John P. Senning and, subsequently, his work was rechecked by Jacob A. Hofto and Mr. Pease, the latter also making the survey of some ten counties, independently. In this manner, all the one hundred and two counties of the state were reported.

Mr. Pease, the general editor, has written an elaborate introduction for the report, "based partly upon a study of the session laws of the state, partly on conclusions drawn from" his "personal observations in the counties visited, and from notes of the other persons engaged in the survey." The records of each county were given one thorough examination;